

Esports should not be confused with video gaming when reporting cyberbullying

Highlight: The present communication provides clarifications and constructive criticism to the letter by Sharma et al. (2018) concerning cyberbullying in esports.

Keywords: Esports; Videogames; Gaming addiction; Cyberbullying; Gaming motivation

I was interested to read the letter by Sharma, Anand and Mathew (2018) concerning their case report on the implications of esports for changing platform of expression of bullying. As an academic who has published papers on esports (e.g., Bányai, Griffiths, Király & Demetrovics, 2017; Faust, Meyer & Griffiths, 2013), videogame addiction (e.g., Griffiths, Kuss & King, 2012; Pontes & Griffiths, 2014), and cyberbullying (e.g., Griffiths, 2014; Zsila, Orosz, Király et al., 2017) I am writing to correct and provide additional commentary on some of the material cited in the letter by Sharma and colleagues.

The published letter makes it very clear that bullying within the context of esports is the focus of the communication. While there is no universally accepted definition of esports, there is general consensus that esports relates to professional videogame playing where individuals concerned play professionally as their occupation rather than for fun and recreational purposes (Bányai et al., 2018). The overwhelming number of video gamers play for fun and recreation, and simply to entertain themselves.

The 19-year old gamer described in Sharma et al.'s case study was not an esports player therefore the focus of the letter is misleading. From the description provided, the player may well have become addicted to videogames over time given that he was playing videogames up to 10 hours a day, and because he was given treatment to decrease the amount of time he spent playing videogames. However, his motivations for playing videogames (primarily to alleviate boredom and loneliness) are not the motivations of a professional (esport) gamer (who play to earn money because it is their job). The fact that videogame addicts and esports players are arguably behaviourally very similar if not identical (i.e., they both play videogames for long hours every day) does not mean they should be classed similarly. Additionally, in my own research, I have come across esports players who clinicians might claim are addicted to videogames. However, I and my colleagues have argued that such esports players in such circumstances are arguably addicted to their work rather than addicted to the videogames (Faust et al., 2012; Griffiths, 2017).

Also, there is no evidence in the empirical literature that cyberbullying takes place within esports video gaming. This is because esports players play professionally and esports tournaments are played in front of huge audiences. Therefore, such players are unlikely to cyberbully or be cyberbullied because they are playing in public online forums. Cyberbullying by esports players would also be detrimental to their professional reputation.

Finally, the letter by Sharma and colleagues appears to be claiming that cyberbullying within online gaming is a new area but I and my colleagues have been publishing papers on this phenomenon since 2012 (e.g., Thacker & Griffiths, 2012; Griffiths, 2014) yet no reference was made to this work in the published letter.

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